

Protesters block entrances, set fires, vandalize; More than 200 people were arrested for trashing property and attacking police officers

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The Washington police chief says 217 people have been arrested, accused of rioting during inauguration protests, and six officers are being treated for minor injuries as clashes between protestors and police continue on inauguration day.

Earlier, at least one vehicle was set on fire as protests escalated in downtown Washington.

A plume of thick black smoke billowed from a vandalized limousine at the corner of K St. and 13th St. NW. Riot police worked to remove people from the area, a few blocks from the inaugural parade route.

Police were using what appeared to be flash-bang grenades to help control the scene.

The activity followed a period of relative calm.

Protesters registered their rage against the new president Friday in a chaotic confrontation with police who used pepper spray and stun grenades in a melee just blocks from Trump's inaugural parade route.

Scores were arrested for trashing property and attacking officers.

Several spirited demonstrations unfolded peacefully at various security checkpoints near the Capitol as police helped ticket-holders get through to the inaugural ceremony. Signs read, "Resist Trump Climate Justice Now," "Let Freedom Ring," "Free Palestine."

But about a mile from the National Mall, police gave chase to a group of about 100 protesters who smashed the windows of downtown businesses including a Starbucks, a Bank of America and a McDonald's as they denounced capitalism and Trump.

Police in riot gear, wearing helmets and body shields, used pepper spray from large canisters and eventually cordoned off protesters at 12th and L Sts. in northwest Washington. Some people were treated for exposure to tear gas and some were vomiting.

The confrontation began an hour before Trump took the oath of office and escalated several hours later as the crowd of protesters swelled to more than 1,000, some wearing gas masks and with arms chained together inside PVC pipe. One said the demonstrators were "bringing in the cavalry."

When some crossed police lines, taunting, "Put the pigs in the ground," police charged with batons and pepper spray, as well as stun grenades, which are used to shock and disperse crowds. Loud booms echoed through the streets about six blocks from where Trump would soon hold his inaugural parade.

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Some protesters picked up bricks and concrete from the sidewalk and hurled them at police lines. Some rolled metal trash cans at police.

Police said in a statement that the group damaged vehicles, destroyed property and set small fires while armed with crowbars and hammers. Peter Newsham, the interim police chief of the Metropolitan Police Department, said the group caused "significant damage" along a number of blocks and that more than 90 people were arrested and charged with rioting.

Demonstrators blocked streets with newspaper boxes. Another protester was standing on a mailbox and waving a rainbow flag.

The large inauguration day demonstration in downtown Washington took place at the edge of a zone where vehicles weren't allowed to drive Friday. As a result, motorists got caught in the confrontation between protesters and police.

Some tried to turn around, but in at least one place, newspaper boxes and trash cans were overturned in the street and a fire set.

The Washington Post reported that one of its video journalists was taken to the ground by police while recording video of the large protest going on in downtown Washington.

Before inauguration day, the DisruptJ20 coalition, named after the date of the inauguration, had promised that people participating in its actions in Washington would attempt to shut down the celebrations, risking arrest when necessary.

Earlier in the day, as guests were going in to the ceremony, lines for ticket-holders entering two gates stretched for blocks at one point as protesters clogged entrances.

Trump supporter Brett Ecker said the protesters were frustrating, but weren't going to put a damper on his day.

"They're just here to stir up trouble," said the 36-year-old public school teacher.

"It upsets me a little bit that people choose to do this, but yet again, it's one of the things I love about this country."

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